5: Harrison D-4 (1912-1924) 1924 M1 Middle East M1
Maritime Arabs Mk 2

M
795

Since its inception shortly after the death of the Prophet, the Shiah heresy has given rise to numerous distinct sects, all more or less closely allied with the common faith. Under it dervish orders have flourished. The theology of many of these orders has more in common with the pantheism of India than with the monotheism of real Mohammedanism. Mysticism of the most extreme sort has always been one of their characteristics. A prominent example of this tendency of the Shiahs to form secret orders is seen in the Ismailites, or Assassins, who were a medieval development of the faith. They were a carefully organized secret society with lodges scattered over the whole Mohammedan world. There were seven orders in the lodge and those who attained to the highest had ceased to be real Mohammedans at all. This society adopted assassination as a legitimate method of work. By them murder was reduced to a fine art, and they spread terror over the whole Mohammedan world in the later days of the Baghdad Caliphate. The Mongol invaders who destroyed Baghdad and ravaged Mesopotamia have at least this much to their credit, that they wiped out this evil sect.

The Ismailites, although they achieved more notoriety than other groups in the eyes of the non-Mohammedan world, are only one of a great number of Shiah sects, many of which played a prominent part in the political and religious development of Islam in the past and are extremely active elements today. It is beyond our province, however, to follow their history in detail, and for purposes of general consideration the modern Shiah sects may be regarded as a unit.

FWP A
● 795

This highly colored faith with its tendency to pantheism and mysticism, with its saint worship and ritual

5: Harrison D-4 (1912-1924) 1924 M1 Middle East
Maritime Arabs M K2
Bahrain M22
Saudi Arabia M51

and graphic portrayal of the sufferings of saints and martyrs, has a large following among present-day Arabs, particularly in Mesopotamia and among the pearl divers of the Persian Gulf. It seems to appeal especially to the laboring classes. The vast majority of the pearl divers of Bahrein and the East Coast are Shiahs. Just when this schismatic faith penetrated the district no one seems to know. Bahrein is an island, and was once under Persian domination, although the Persian mainland is much farther away than the Arabian, which indeed is in sight of Bahrein on clear days. Possibly as a result of this Persian occupation, the islands and the adjacent Arabian mainland are populated by a peculiar community known as the Baharina, which bears every evidence in temperament and otherwise of being a mixture of Arab and Persian blood. A certain number of Sunni Arabs do dive for pearls, but generally they are strangers who come from outside. The two classes rarely associate even in their work. The Baharina as a community are solidly Shiah in their religious convictions.

The ideas of the Shiahs have never penetrated deeply into inland Arabia, and there the date gardeners are Sunnis, as are also the artisans. Hasa, however, which is at the same time a large oasis and a pearl-diving community near the coast, has been reached by the Shiah faith, with the result that the community is divided sharply into two classes. The smaller class includes the rulers and the merchants and land-owners and is Sunni in its religious convictions. The other, much larger class includes pearl divers and artisans, of whom there are thousands, and the gardeners, who must constitute from seventy-five to ninety per cent of the population, and these are all Shiahs. One might almost say that every man in Hasa who does an honest day's work is a Shiah.